UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council President expresses concern about situations in Bihac, Tuzla and Sarajevo demilitarized zones; endorses UNPROFOR efforts on ground.

+ Secretary-General has meetings with German President and Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee; to meet in Geneva next week with senior United Nations officials on former Yugoslavia.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to have meetings with Guatemalan Government and URNG with view to speeding up negotiating process.

+ United Nations and UNIFIL issue protests after Israeli forces fire on Nepalese peace-keepers in Lebanon.

+ NGOs say they will maintain programmes in Somalia after UNOSOM II withdrawal, but seek safety guarantees from Somali political leaders.

+ UNFPA Executive Director says Programme of Action adopted by 1994 Population Conference reinforces Convention on Discrimination against Women.

+ Preparatory Committee for upcoming Conference of States Parties to NPT to hold final session at Headquarters next week.

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The President of the Security Council, Emilio Cardenas (Argentina), today expressed concern about the situations in the Bosnian enclaves of Bihac and Tuzla, and in the demilitarized zones around Sarajevo. In a statement to correspondents, he said the Council endorsed the efforts of United Nations personnel on the ground to resolve those situations. He added that the Council would be following up on the matter.

There was an upsurge of fighting around the town of Velika Kladusa in the Bihac pocket yesterday, according to a United Nations spokesman. Meanwhile,

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there has been tension between the Bosnian parties in Tuzla, relating to efforts to reopen the airport there. The Bosnian Government side has objected to the stationing of a Bosnian Serb liaison officer at the UNPROFOR base in Tuzla.

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On the last day of his official visit to Germany, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today met with President Roman Herzog in Berlin. They discussed the benefits the world would gain from a strong German presence in the United Nations, and the challenges facing the Organization in the years ahead. He later had a meeting with the Mayor of Berlin.

The Secretary-General then left Berlin for Geneva, where he was scheduled to meet with the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lansana Kouyaté. He announced today that he would convene a meeting in Geneva next week with the Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg, Special Representative Yasushi Akashi, the Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), General Bertrand de la Presle, and the Force Commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lieutenant-General Michael Rose.

Earlier in the day in Bonn, the Secretary-General met with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag. They had a wide-ranging discussion on the role of Germany in the United Nations, and on the Organization's efforts in preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and peacemaking.

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The Secretary-General has instructed the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Marrack Goulding, to travel to Guatemala City and Mexico City to meet with the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), respectively. He took that action after consultations with the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan peace process (Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, United States and Venezuela).

Mr. Goulding, accompanied by the United Nations Moderator of the peace process, will put forward proposals for speeding up negotiations. He will also review progress made in the installation and operations of the United Nations Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

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The Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) today issued a strong protest after Israeli forces fired three tank rounds for no apparent reason at a position occupied by Nepalese peace-keepers. Two rounds landed near a generator, while an anti-personnel round landed in the centre of the position. However, no peace-keepers were injured in the incident, which was also protested at United Nations Headquarters.

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Most international non-governmental organizations in Somalia have promised to maintain their programmes after the departure of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) in March. They gave assurances to that effect at a meeting in Mogadishu today with senior United Nations security official Benon Sevan.

However, the NGOs expressed serious concern about the security situation in Somalia. They stated that they wanted guarantees from Somali political leaders that the country's airports and seaports would remain safe and accessible to legitimate users.

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The Programme of Action adopted by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development was based on principles which reinforced the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, according to Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). She made that comment yesterday, in an address to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Dr. Sadik, who was Secretary-General of the Population Conference, said the Programme of Action clearly recognized the need to empower women, to ensure gender equality and to place women's rights at the centre of population and development activities. It stated that eliminating violence against women and ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility were cornerstones of population and development programmes. The Programme supported the Convention in the area of health and family planning, and set forth quantitative goals which directly supported gender equality. She called on the expert members of the Committee to prevail upon their governments to give adequate attention to the needs of women.

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The Preparatory Committee for the review and extension Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will hold its final session at Headquarters next week. The Conference itself will be held from 17 April to 12 May, 25 years after the Treaty entered into force, to decide whether it should continue in force indefinitely, or be extended for a fixed period or periods. That decision will require a majority of States parties to the Treaty. As of 16 January, there were 169 States parties, Algeria and Ukraine being the most recent accessions.

The Committee will address all remaining procedural issues such as finalization of the draft rules of procedure and the agenda, and consider any final document which might be adopted by the Conference. As the Conference called for under the extension provision in the Treaty this year coincides with the quinquennial review of the Treaty's effectiveness and implementation of its obligations (article VIII), the Conference will address those aspects as well.

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